

# EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN HOMILETIC MAGAZINE.

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## Sermon Outlines.

### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

MATT. 21, 1—9.

This a day of great joy. First Sunday of a new church-year, also the beginning of the blessed season of Advent. Advent=coming. Our gospel-lesson a real Advent text. Narrates the solemn advent of Jesus in Jerusalem. Jewish Easter near at hand. Bands of pilgrims, Deut. 16, 16. Jesus also; for Matt. 3, 15. But this time His going to Jerusalem had a greater significance than merely to comply with the Law. On former occasions He came unheralded, unnoticed, but this time: vv. 7—9; v. 10: "All the city was moved." Why this manner of advent? A great day of gracious visitation for Jerusalem.

But that word of the prophet intended not for Jerusalem only. The Daughter of Sion is not merely Jerusalem, nor all inhabitants of Jerusalem. That small, faithful band that waited with ardent desire for the coming of King Messiah, *e. g.*, Simeon and Anna. But also all those who, like Simeon and Anna, etc. We, too. Therefore this day a day of great grace and rejoicing for us also. It is therefore a source of great joy and pleasure as well as of comfort that I can this day again bring you the message:—

"DAUGHTER OF SION, BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE!"

1. *Who this King is;*
2. *How He cometh to us;*
3. *How we should receive Him.*

#### 1.

"Daughter of Sion, thy King cometh unto thee!" Who is this king? "King"—at this word our thoughts involuntarily turn to the great and mighty of this earth, rulers of great kingdoms and empires, *e. g.*, David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, Caesar Augustus, etc.

The King of Sion is none such, His kingdom not being of this world, John 18, 36. The Daughter of Sion not an empire like that of David, etc. But look at your King coming to Jerusalem! No pomp and splendor. The prophet described Him as "lowly." He is a man

of low station in this world. The *élite* in Israel gave Him scant honor, yea, ardently hated and persecuted Him. — And how poor! poorer than the foxes and the birds of the air, Matt. 8, 20. Not even the beast on which He rides does He call His own. No stately charger covered with costly trappings; a humble beast of burden, and that a borrowed one! — You need not look for days of ease and indolence with this King. After He had fed the multitude, they would have made Him king, John 6, 15 a. But Jesus departed from them. No, this King is not a king after the fashion of the kings of this world nor after the taste of man, John 19, 15; 1 Cor. 1, 23.

Yet, He is “a mighty Monarch, as by the Word we’re told.” Take another look at that procession before the gates of Jerusalem! When ready to make His triumphal entry, Jesus sent two of His disciples, etc., v. 2. He knew from afar off that there in the village, at the cross-road, Mark 11, 4, they would find those animals. He added: “And if any man say aught unto you,” etc. He knew the owners would remonstrate, but also that the word, “The Lord hath need of them,” would suffice to make them willing to, etc. — Disciples found everything as Jesus had said: the beasts, remonstrance by the owners, Mark 11, 5; Luke 19, 33. This King the omniscient, omnipotent God who knows and fashions the thoughts of men. The King entering Jerusalem, and who would come also to us in the new year, is He in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead.

Cause for *rejoicing*? Not rather fear and tremble with terror? Israel at Mount Sinai. We sinners. Will the King not punish? Yes, the King can wax angry, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Hebr. 10, 31. He shall speak unto the nations on earth in His wrath, etc., Ps. 2, 5, at His appointed time. But *now* is the accepted time, now is the day of *salvation*, 2 Cor. 6, 2, the time of grace. More, the King does not come to the Daughter of Sion at all to judge and to condemn. “He cometh unto thee *meek*.” Became poor for our sakes, 2 Cor. 8, 9. Humbled Himself to be our Counselor, to work out salvation for the Daughter of Sion. He cometh to thee “*having salvation*,” Zech. 9, 9, and to break the yoke of your burden and the rod of your oppressor, Is. 9, 3. This King is your best friend, your *Savior*. Forgiveness for your sins, also in the new church-year.

## 2.

And do you exclaim with longing desire, Ah, that this King might come unto me! Where can I find Him? How, by what way or means, would He come to me?

No longer comes visibly. Humiliation, poverty, etc., over. Now in glory, exalted; sitteth at the right hand of His Father. — But, nevertheless, He still comes to us with all His blessings and riches, His grace and salvation. How? He has told you; for, says He:



John 5, 39. In and through His Word thy King cometh unto thee, thou Daughter of Sion!

For the Word of your King is different from man's word. Man's word not able to give and convey what it expresses, but—. True, like the King Himself, little esteemed by the world, 1 Cor. 1, 18 a; 2, 14. But: 1 Cor. 1, 25. 18 b. Example of the power of His Word from our text, v. 3; coll. Mark 11, 5. 6. His Word not an empty sound, but: John 6, 63 b. *Deus loquitur non verba, sed res.* Hebr. 4, 12. — Now your King has commanded: "Preach the Gospel!" etc.; proclaim to all men, etc., life and salvation! He has charged: "Search the Scriptures!" etc. That not a mere narrative of events and facts, but Jesus Himself present with all His riches; gives and conveys them, Rom. 1, 16; Matt. 18, 20. Ah! you know how and where your King comes unto you, in the Sacraments, through preaching and His Word.

### 3.

One more word in conclusion. Your King would again come to you in the new church-year with all His, etc. What should, then, *you* do? What did the multitudes in our text do? Answer: vv. 8. 9. Do the same! What do people do when the President announces his visit? What do you do when a highly esteemed friend wants to come to you? You prepare for him, joyfully receive him, take him home, give him the privileges of your home. Then do not do *less* for Jesus, your King. Meet Him! When He would come to you in church, do not greet Him with absence. Let Him enter into your *heart*. Show that He is your *King*; do Him homage, with *heart* and *hands* and *voices*. Live in this perverse generation so as not to disgrace your King.

Blessed are you if you thus receive your King. He will come to you, make His abode with you, and manifest Himself to you. Whatever may befall you in the new church-year, He, etc. "O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King in triumph comes," etc. (Am. Luth. Publ. Board Hymnbk., No. 30, 3.) Therefore: "O great King of glory, come," etc. "Hail! Hosanna! David's Son," etc. (ibid. 21, 2. 4.)

THEO. BUNDENTHAL.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

LUKE 21, 25—36.

The Savior is speaking of the final and total destruction of heaven and earth at the end of all time, v. 33. (Ps. 102, 27; 2 Pet. 3, 10; Rev. 21, 1.) An unprecedented catastrophe!

Yet one thing shall rise out of these ruins like a pillar of steel, the Word of God. As in the past, so in the future. The books of men have their day and grow obsolete. God's Word is like Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Hence the subject:

## THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LAPSE OF AGES.

1. *It has outlived everything in the past.*
2. *It stands just as firmly to-day, and will continue to stand so unto all eternity.*

## 1.

a. "Heaven and earth shall pass away." This has been going on, in a measure, ever since the fall of man into sin. Heaven and earth have ever been crumbling. Kingdoms, nations, cities, mighty rulers of men, have been wiped off the face of the earth by floods, earthquakes, wars, pestilence, volcanoes, tidal waves, death, etc. The first world was swallowed up by the deluge. Babylon, Niniveh, Egypt, Media, Greece, the Roman Empire are no more. Stars have passed away. The dissolution of the heavenly bodies, as Christ foretold it, has been steadily going on.

b. God's Word has remained unchanged. a. In the past all warnings and threats have been fulfilled. Noah's sermon about the oncoming flood; Sodom; the captivity of Assyria. Judah would not be told that the bondage of Babylon was awaiting it; Babylon and Niniveh and the other heathen neighbors of the Jews would not be cautioned by the prophets; Christ's warnings of the destruction of Jerusalem were unheeded. But in each case God's words were punctually and inerrantly fulfilled. b. So it has been with His promises. Israel delivered out of Pharaoh's hands, and brought to the land of promise. After seventy years the bondage of Babylon was turned. Even Abraham's faith tried. And thousands of devout souls undoubtedly entertained fears as to the coming of Messiah. Yet He came. c. Even as to the minutest details God's Word has not failed to come true. Again and again stated that seemingly insignificant things transpired so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

c. This Word of God has been delivered to us intact. Of the canon of the Old Testament, Paul says: Rom. 3, 2. Of the New Testament the same holds true. *Enoch F. Burr*: "Eighteen centuries have passed since the Bible was finished. They have been centuries of great changes. In their course the world has been wrought over into newness at almost every point. But to-day the text of the Scriptures, after copyings almost innumerable, and after having been tossed about through ages of ignorance and tumult, is found by exhaustive criticism to be unaltered in every important particular — there being not a single doctrine, nor duty, nor fact of any grade, that is brought into question by variations of readings — a fact that stands alone in the history of such ancient literature." The Bible-burning Pope has spent his fury in vain. The false prophets, with their strong delusions, are unable to utterly extinguish that bright and shining light. Armies of Spinozas, Hobbeses, Voltaires, Rousseaus, Paines, and Ingersolls have perished, but —.



2.

a. The signs which are to precede the Judgment and which are enumerated in our text, and elsewhere are steadily going into fulfillment before our very eyes, an undeniable proof that God's Word stands just as firmly as ever. What remarkable events have occurred in the last decades! The Jews throughout the world stand as a testimony of the imperishable truth of God's Word, v. 32. Compare the prophecy of Moses concerning their destiny: Lev. 26, 33—39; Deut. 4, 27; 28, 37. 64—67. Likewise the word of Christ: Luke 21, 24. What a marvelous proof for the truth of God's Word that after so many wars, battles, and sieges, after so many rebellions, massacres, and persecutions, after so many years of captivity, slavery, and misery, the Jews are not destroyed utterly, and though scattered among all people, yet subsist as a distinct people! God's word is steadily being fulfilled.

b. Another proof for the imperishable nature of God's Word lies in the fact that it can be read from year to year, with an attention that never tires, and with an interest that never cloys. It will stand a thousand readings, and he who has been the most studious and the most careful reader is surest of finding new wonders there. One may outgrow other books, but the Bible widens and deepens with our years. It is a living Word, with life as eternal as that of God. Hence it can never lose its fascination, nor perish, John 6, 63.

c. This Word of God will continue to stand unshaken in the future: all the threats of God, all the promises of the Gospel. Finally the end of all things will also come. Men may rave and war and rage, the beacon of God's Word will shine in spite of it all.

d. This truth, that God's Word shall not pass away, should serve us as a warning, vv. 34—36. Let us be prepared! Then we shall be able to meet the Judgment Day in good cheer, vv. 28—31. For by this same Word we shall be judged, John 12, 48. O. C. A. B.

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

MATT. 11, 2—10.

Immediately after the fall of man God promised unto him a Savior, Gen. 3, 15. This promise He often repeated, Is. 59, 20; Hos. 13, 14. All the faithful of the Old Covenant patiently waited and anxiously longed for this Savior. They prayed: Ps. 14, 7; Is. 64, 1. — Who was this Savior to be? Has he already arrived, or is he yet to come? The Jews are still expecting him. But the Christians know and believe that he has already arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

JESUS OF NAZARETH THE PROMISED SAVIOR AND MESSIAH.  
This is proved,

1. *By the miracles which Jesus performed;*
2. *By the appearance and mission of John the Baptist.*

## 1.

a. Text, vv. 2. 3. John had been cast into prison. Why? Because he had preached repentance to King Herod, and had reproved him for having his brother Philip's wife, Matt. 14, 4. Hearing through his disciples of the works of Christ while in prison, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him: v. 3.

b. Why this question? Was John in doubt as to whether or not Jesus was the promised Savior and Messiah? No! John was fully convinced that Jesus was the promised Savior. God had told him: John 1, 33. And John had seen this, Matt. 3, 16. He heard the voice from heaven, Luke 3, 22. Not John was in doubt, but his disciples were. They did not want to believe that Jesus was "He that should come." They thought like Nathanael, John 1, 46. So John sent two of them to Jesus to ask Him: v. 3.

c. What did Jesus answer? Vv. 4—6. With these words Jesus called their attention to His works, to the miracles which He was performing. He meant to say: Behold the miracles! Do they not clearly show you who I am? Do they not prove that I am the promised Savior?

Already in the Old Testament it was prophesied that the true Messiah was to prove His Messiahship by doing miracles, Is. 35, 4—6; 29, 18; 42, 7. Had Jesus therefore not performed any miracles, He could not have been the promised Savior. But He performed miracles in great number. The fig-tree withered away, Matt. 21, 19—21; the water was changed into wine, John 2, 1—11; the son of the nobleman was healed, John 4, 46—54; five loaves and two fish were multiplied so wonderfully that five thousand men were fed, and yet twelve baskets full of fragments remained, Matt. 14, 14—20; the daughter of the woman of Canaan was healed, Matt. 15, 28. 30; the winds and the sea were rebuked so that there was a great calm, Matt. 8, 24—26; the young man of Nain was raised from the dead, Luke 7, 11—17; Lazarus, who had been in the grave four days, was called forth, John 11, 43; the dead daughter of Jairus was restored to life, Matt. 9, 25. Thus Jesus proved that He was "He that should come."

But Christ's Messiahship is proved also by the appearance and mission of John the Baptist.

## 2.

a. When the disciples of John had departed, Jesus began to speak to the multitude, vv. 7—10. Jesus here speaks of John as His forerunner, as the one who should precede Him and prepare His way for Him. — That the promised Savior was to have such a forerunner, such a way-preparer, was already foretold by the mouth of the prophet in the Old Testament, Mal. 3, 1; 4, 5. And this forerunner was also minutely described by the prophet, Is. 40, 3. Every true Israelite could therefore know that when the forerunner appeared, the Savior, the Messiah, would also be at hand. For this reason Jesus here



("Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet," v. 9) also refers to John that the people might believe that He, Jesus, was "He that should come." He refers to John, as it were, as to the morning-star that was to precede the rising of the sun. When the morning-star appears, the sun is about to rise. And as soon as the sun rises, the morning-star sinks and disappears. Thus it was with John and Jesus. John, the morning-star; Jesus, the Sun. Thus the appearance of John the Baptist proves that Jesus was the promised Savior and Messiah.

b. This is proved also by the mission of John. The mission of the forerunner of the Messiah was to point Him out to the people as the one who should come. And this John did. He bore record that Jesus is the Son of God, John 1, 34. He pointed to Him with his finger as to the Lamb of God, John 1, 29. 30. Hence no one in Israel should have doubted that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior.

Jesus the promised Savior and Messiah! We must expect no other. He who believes in Him shall be saved; he who despises and rejects Him shall be damned. Let us believe in Him, cling to Him in faith, and we shall through the portals of death enter into the eternal glories of heaven.

H. A. K.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

JOHN 1, 19—28.

##### I.

In order to be a Christian one must have knowledge of at least the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, Rom. 10, 14; John 17, 3. Alas, many very much satisfied with rudiments. No desire to increase knowledge. Bible and Catechism stored away after confirmation. Hear sermons, but not with desire to learn. Convinced, know all. Consequence—lose what little knowledge they have had, 1 Cor. 3, 2; Hebr. 5, 2 sqq.; Eph. 4, 14. — On other hand, 2 Tim. 3, 7.

MANY ARE EVER LEARNING AND NEVER ABLE TO COME  
TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH.

1. *They are eager to learn merely to gratify their curiosity.*

a. John 1, 6—8; Luke 3, 3. Strange appearance and habits of John the Baptist, Matt. 3, 2; boldly and fearlessly calling all to repentance, even Pharisees and Sadducees, Matt. 3, 7—10. 12; administering new rite, baptism; had not requested Sanhedrin's sanction. Attracts great multitudes, Matt. 3, 5. Report soon reaches Jerusalem. Curiosity of religious leaders roused, Jer. 27, 2; Is. 20, 2; 2 Kings 1, 8. But who is this man? Must investigate, send embassy. — Curiosity not altogether idle, prompted by desire to guard their own interests. What if asked concerning John and his mission? No answer or evasive answer would be equivalent to admission of

ignorance and indifference. Could shatter their influence. Must render effective opposition. Not bent upon learning truth for truth's sake.

b. Many know that Roman priests wear peculiar garbs, make sign of cross; churches have altars, pulpits, candles, etc. Have been informed something similar in Lutheran churches. Curiosity roused. Must learn if so.—Have heard that minister of certain church is eloquent speaker, fine diction, quaint expressions, unusual way of handling texts, etc. Must hear him. (Cf. *Mag.*, Vol. IV, p. 15.)—Bible solves many problems which have baffled men of letters and science, *e. g.*, origin of world, etc.; contains most interesting history; amazing miracles, etc., afford interesting study. Read Bible, hear sermons, even ask for explanation of certain statements, incidents, seeming contradictions, etc., of Bible. Eager to learn merely to satisfy curiosity.—Curiosity, interest. Every cultured person must be familiar with main topics of Bible. Intelligent conversation on religious subjects, denominational differences, church ceremonies, prominent clergymen, etc.; use Biblical parables, phrases in conversation; number of times they have read through Bible. Perhaps patronage of religiously inclined. Ever learning, but never, etc. Never ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Apply neither Law nor Gospel to themselves. Familiar with much that is true, but never learn *the* truth, 1 Tim. 1, 15.

2. *They are willing to accept anything that corresponds to their preconceived ideas of truth.*

a. All Jews expected the Christ. Right! Prophecy. Hopes were carnal. Baptist attracted such multitudes. If he would but consent, they would hail him with delight as such a "savior" of Israel. Some expected return of Elias the Tishbite before Messiah. No promise. Comp. Mal. 4, 5, with Luke 1, 17. Expected "that prophet." Misconception of Deut. 18, 15, 18. This promise pointed to Christ Himself. John in his strange apparel, etc. Willing to accept him. In fact, are actually tendering him such honors.—As far as salvation of soul is concerned, Jews (John 8, 39 a. 41 b), priests, and Levites gloried in possession of temple, Ark of Covenant, perfunctory performance of temple rites, sacrifices, etc.; Pharisees (24), Luke 18, 2 sqq. Had John eulogized nationality, temple, personal piety.—Willing to accept anything, etc.

b. Many seek heaven on earth. Reconstruction and reform of social conditions, moral uplift of masses, freedom to enjoy life to heart's content, relief from fear of future retribution by preaching God of love, teaching man not accountable for sins,—due to misdirected education and training, punishment in *this* world,—or no sin whatever. Then earth soon turned into paradise. That preconceived idea of truth. Willing to accept anything that corresponds:



Eddyism, Doweyism, socialism, Russellism — millennium, etc. Ready to accept any impostor, reformer, agitator, who in the name of religion voices their sentiments. Not truth, but indorsement of own preconceived ideas of truth. — Parents have been pious people, themselves active members of church, perform all devotional acts. And besides, none can charge them with serious misdemeanor. "They admit that they have a few faults and flaws of character; but these are so trifling as to hardly be worth mentioning, and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous, and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize: if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition; they have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down; their sails are not rent, and they hope to run into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance, and hearing a loud 'Well done!'" Preconceived ideas of truth, the fixed idea of truth in every natural man. Willing to accept anything that corresponds. Love to hear applause of merits, etc.

3. *When the truth is presented to them, they suddenly lose all interest.*

Jews appear to be very eager to learn truth, ply John with questions. Finally ask: v. 22. John presents truth. Suddenly lose all interest; no more questions, turn away in disgust. Even so many to-day when truth is presented.

a. Concerning Scriptures, v. 23 b. John points to Isaiah. If Jews would learn truth, must look to Scripture. Such arrogance! Were they not priests and Levites? Knew prophets, knew what they expected, and did not come to have views corrected. — Point to Scripture as only infallible guide to truth — nothing new, knew that long ago. Besides, have our own views. Bible hardly up to date. Original research. Science has disproved many assertions.

b. Concerning Christ. Lord, vv. 23. 27; God, Is. 40, 3. Standeth among you — as one of you — man. Cometh after me, *i. e.*, to preach. Such unpretentious person cannot interest Jews. — Preach Christ crucified for sins of the world — foolishness!

c. Concerning himself. Voice in wilderness. Oh, is that all? — Ministers messengers of God, 2 Cor. 5, 20. Nothing more? Not molders of public opinion, etc.?

d. Concerning themselves. "Make straight," etc. Not necessary. "Standeth among you, but know Him not." Does not suit. — Call men to repentance — can take care of ourselves! Lost without Him — oh, well, does not interest us. Away with Him!

*Theme.* — Let us read, hear, learn diligently. Prov. 18, 15; 1 Pet. 2, 2; John 5, 39; 2 Tim. 3, 15—17; Eccl. 5, 1; 2 Pet. 1, 8; John 8, 31. 32. Point to Christmas message. R. N.

## II.

There is much envy and rivalry among the children of this world. Each desires ascendancy over the other, especially in positions of honor. It is the highest aim and ambition of the disciple to supersede his master. — Much envy and rivalry is met with in Christian congregations. This ought not so to be, Rom. 12, 10. If there must be any rivalry here, let it be in humility. — Nothing must be more deplored than when those who style themselves Christian ministers try to crowd the Master, Christ, into the background, and themselves seek to occupy the most prominent position in the hearts of their hearers. — Not so John the Baptist. When his ministry was nearing its final goal, his disciples approached him, saying: John 3, 26. John answered: vv. 28. 29; especially: v. 30. This is also the essence of John's testimony in our text. Let us consider:

THE ESSENCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY BEFORE  
THE DEPUTATION FROM JERUSALEM.

1. *I must decrease;*                      2. *He (Christ) must increase.*

## 1.

John the Baptist had been preaching and baptizing at the Jordan, in the wilderness of Judea, for some time. An extraordinary preacher, indeed! Fearless, Matt. 3, 7. 10; an extraordinary message, Matt. 3, 2; strange attire, Matt. 3, 4. His meat was locusts and wild honey. Administered a then novel rite, Baptism. Attracted the multitudes of all classes from town and country, Mark 3, 4. Tidings of what these many months had occurred by the banks of the Jordan must early have reached Jerusalem, and ultimately stirred to the depths its religious leaders. They could no longer ignore this man, and the movement he had inaugurated. Who is he? Whence came he? What is his aim and object? Is there any truth in the rumor (Luke 3, 15) that he must be the Christ, or Elias, or that prophet? These leaders, very likely the Sanhedrin, send a trustworthy deputation consisting of priests and Levites. No sooner have the emissaries of that august body reached John than they forthwith begin questioning him in regard to his person and mission. Christ? Elias? that prophet? They are willing for a season to rejoice in his light, John 5, 35. Could boast, We were the first ones to discover and publicly and officially to acclaim him as such. Perhaps he would be a tool in their hands to carry out their political intrigues, and cast off the Roman yoke. Therefore they actually tender him those highest honors. (Luther. XI, 98.)

John disclaims all such honor regarding his own person. Not desirous of vainglory. The bare suggestion on the part of the deputation that he might be the Christ sounds like a blasphemy to him. Note emphatic denial expressed in vv. 20. 27 b. When they intimate that he might be Elias, the Tishbite, he makes the same resolute dis-



avowal, v. 21 a. Though Malachi 4, 5; Luke 1, 17; Matt. 11, 14; 17, 11 sq., he desires once for all to shatter the illusion of the Jews that he is the Tishbite. The suggestion that he might be "that prophet," Deut. 18, 15, 18, which prophecy they did not apply to Christ, but to one of the prophets of the Old Testament, whose return from the dead and reappearance they expected before Messiah, he repels with the same energy as the others, v. 21 b. When asked: v. 22, he answers: v. 23. True, Isaiah (40, 3) has foretold his coming, but he desires to be nothing more than that divine prophecy says of him—voice of one crying in the wilderness. He is not Master, but forerunner, way-preparer. (See John 3, 29.) Not his purpose and intention to pave for himself a way into the hearts of the people. Nay, he must decrease. The Jews must abandon all exaggerated erroneous opinions concerning him, and consider him only "the voice," etc., unworthy to occupy the lowliest position and render the meanest service (v. 27 b) to the Greater One. Does not weaken in his self-abnegation when emissaries threateningly ask: v. 25. What humility! The greatest of those born of women (Luke 7, 28) is also the most humble, the most retiring, and self-forgetful.

*Application.*—Ministers are often praised for their learning, eloquence, fearlessness, success, etc. While old Adam thirstily drinks in such praise, we must wield a stunning blow at him, crucify him, remember James 1, 17; 1 Cor. 15, 10 a; 4, 7, and say: 2 Cor. 3, 5, 6. We do not preach ourselves. Must decrease, desire to be nothing but ministers, servants, to prepare way for Him whose shoe's latchet, etc., v. 27 b. (Cassock covers our person—emblem that we are nothing but voices, mouthpieces. Luke 10, 16 a; Mark 13, 11.)—Christians in general are often praised for uprightness, application to duty, etc. Old Adam rejoices. Down with him! Remember: John 15, 6 b. Confess: Phil. 3, 8—12.—Above all, we must continually decrease in our own estimation, humble ourselves before our God, learn truthfully to say: Ps. 143, 2; Job 9, 2, 3; Rom. 7, 18—24. Then true humility will fill our hearts, abide therein, protect us against pride, self-righteousness, and induce us to assert our own worthlessness whenever occasion requires.

## 2.

John says: v. 21 ("I am not"). You are mistaken in the person, but right in making inquiries concerning the Christ at this time, for "He standeth among you," has already made His appearance. "He it is who, coming after me," etc.; *i. e.*, "the next preacher who will come after me is the Lord Himself. He does not yet preach openly, but will be heard soon after me." (Luther.) "Standeth among you," as one of you, true man. "Is preferred before me," obtained greater dignity. "He is greater, higher, mightier than I." So much so that I am not worthy, etc., v. 27 b. Not only the greater

prophet, also more exalted person: Lord, v. 23; God, Is. 40, 3. "He was before me," vv. 15, 30; Prov. 8, 22, 23; John 1, 1—3. "He it is" who foretold my coming and His coming, and the purpose of both, v. 23; Is. 40, 3; Ps. 40, 7—10; Is. 45, 22; 43, 11, 25, and for whose appearance Israel has longed, yearned, and sighed, Ps. 14, 7; Is. 64, 1—the Christ.

"He must increase," not in majesty of His person or office,—in this He can neither decrease nor increase,—but in your hearts; in receiving your homage, worship, adoration. As yet you know Him not, though He stands among you. Strong rebuke. Jews, especially leaders, could and should have known Him. Promises of Old Testament were clear. Should have observed the sign of the time: scepter had departed from Judah. Fullness of the time was come. They well knew (Matt. 2, 4—6) that He was to be born at Bethlehem of Judea. But priests and Levites so enamored of the grandeur of their temple rites, so engrossed with legal observances and Levitical purifications, that they had lost sight of the antitype, Christ. Pharisees, v. 24, were self-satisfied; no Savior needed! Their erroneous notions regarding the Christ and His mission. Resembled the wilderness in which John preached, wayless desert, full of obstructions preventing Christ's entrance. Ye know Him not, and do not want to know Him, John 1, 11. Therefore the Lord has sent me, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" I am come to remove those obstacles preaching repentance; to point out the Christ, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Then I wash and baptize you, as a sign that you are unclean and defiled, and must be cleansed; but I do not baptize you in my own name, or thinking that I could cleanse you, but in His name, concerning whom I preach." "Look well to it, therefore, that you give heed to Him and do not miss Him." "Whoever misses Him has missed salvation, although he have fasted himself to death, and prayed himself into lunacy." (Luther.) He must be formed in you, Gal. 4, 19, dwell in your hearts, Eph. 3, 17, become your one and all. In short, He must increase. When this will have been accomplished, then my most ardent wish will have been fulfilled, the zenith of my ministration been reached.

The Baptist a fine example for all ministers of Christ. Prepare way for Him; expose and batter down all obstructions in His way: love of sin, indifference, worldly-mindedness, self-righteousness, reliance upon perfunctory performance of devotional acts, etc. To this end preach Law without fear or favor, Rom. 3, 20; Gal. 3, 24. Preach Christ. No time to fool away with topics of daily press, scientific lectures, political harangues, etc. Not preach the Christ fashionable in our day: mere man, propounder of Christian morals, sublime example, reformer, martyr; but the Christ of Scriptures, God-man, 1 John 5, 20; 1 Tim. 2, 5, Savior from sin and all dire



consequences, John 1, 36; Matt. 18, 11; 1 John 2, 2; Luke 2, 11, etc. Preach Christ in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 1 Cor. 2, 2. This must be a minister's one and only aim and object: Christ must increase in the hearts of men; on Him they must base all their hopes of salvation, Is. 43, 11; Acts 4, 12; 1 Cor. 3, 11.

Individual Christian must make this the motto and slogan of heart: Christ must increase in me. Diligently read, hear, learn, Word of God to increase in knowledge of Christ. Examine ourselves in light of Law. The greater the knowledge of one's own sinfulness, the more precious will Christ appear. Daily make straight way of Lord by removing all obstacles preventing Him from increasing in us, Gal. 5, 24.

With this determination: I must, etc., in our hearts, let us all, minister and congregation, go forward to the Christmas festival. Blessing will be great. R. N.

## FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE 2, 10. 11.

Glorious message of heavenly herald; spring of our dearest hopes and holiest joys; gave us the most glad some and gracious, brightening and inspiring holiday; 1912 years ago proclaimed on plains of Bethlehem, since echoed and reechoed; to-day rings from every Christian pulpit and heard in every Christian home, amid scenes of decoration and festivity.

### THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL.

1. *Its occasion;*
2. *Its contents;*
3. *Its reception.*

#### 1.

Transferring ourselves to the scene of Christmas message, what do we see? Lowly circumstances, everything humble and poor. Bethlehem—old, dilapidated town; only mark of distinction, birth-place of David. Nation: Jews; lowly, oppressed people, at this time called by decree of Roman emperor to meet at family centers to enroll themselves. Joseph and Mary poor; Joseph a carpenter; no social standing; only place of refuge—stable, grotto. Babe lying in manger.

This the occasion of so much ado? This draws every year millions of souls to Bethlehem's plains? From heaven comes word that it is no ordinary child.

#### 2.

*The Lord.* In that lowly infancy is Deity, in that humble cradle lies the eternal Son of God. Birth unlocks the meaning of promises and prophecies, symbols and wonders of Old Testament; explains the present (we write A. D. 1912) and influences the future. He is center of time, and will continue to be till time ceases in endless years of eternity.

*Savior.* In that one word lies source and secret of Christmas joy. Hard to tell in short compass of a sermon all that is included in that word. Guilt of sin discharged, curse lifted, broken links between God and man readjusted, all the barriers to our immortal happiness and glory swept away.

"Unto you"—shepherds; "all people"—no class, nation, age, sex excluded. Unlimited is its offer, universal in its application. Yet, general as it is, must be made special—unto *you* individually, particularly, personally.

## 3.

Christmas—time of social excitement, domestic pleasure. Let us never forget that Christmas is no mere civic feast, but sacred; its true joy spiritual, its blessedness in contemplation of Christ-child. You do not taste the "great joy" until you know what it is to claim Him as your Lord and your Savior. Faith in Him—right reception.

Ah! dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,  
Within my heart, that it may be  
A quiet chamber kept for Thee!

L. B.

## SECOND CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE 2, 15—20.

Feast of God's greatest gift has come and has gone. Sorry, if nothing has been left behind but a few earthly goods and gifts in house and cupboard. Christmas designed not only for December 25; our entire life an aftermath. How? That is brought home to our reflection in the account of the shepherds.

## THE SHEPHERDS' CONDUCT A PATTERN FOR US.

1. *They sought the Christ-child with diligent and believing hearts.*
2. *They spoke of Him.*
3. *They returned to their calling, praising and glorifying God.*

## 1.

a. No sooner had last echo of Christmas refrain died away in the skies than they exclaim: "Let . . . Bethlehem." Do not say, "Which *shall* come to pass," but, "Which *is* come to pass"—accept angelic announcement as truth; do not philosophize, skepticize, speculate; do not say, "Which *angel*," etc., but, "Which the *Lord*," etc.; they accept it as a message from God. Nor say: "Which the Lord hath made known unto the *world*," or "*men*," but, "unto *us*." Might have thought: Why does God pass by distinguished religionists in Jerusalem; moreover, the promised Messiah a helpless infant—how incredible! They believed.

b. "Came with haste." No darkness of night, no obstruction of hill and plain, no care of flocks hindered them. "Let us *now* go!"—(Application.) Air ringing with gracious invitation of Christ; very name has given designation to this festival. First thing, we must believe Christmas story; accept it as a divine message. Transcends our comprehension, but reality and fact. Secondly, seek the Christ-child! Here in His Church, Word and Sacraments, is Bethlehem. The Sundays just so many spokesmen like angels inviting to come and behold.

## 2.

V. 17. As the shepherds were the first human hearers, so the first human preachers of Christmas tidings.—What was the topic? Luminous brightness of angel-messenger or sweetness of the musical melody? "This Child." What the object of the Holy Ghost in



writing this line? The tongue is a sure index of the heart. Let not these days come and pass and not speak a word on the all-engrossing theme; sing out in lusty voice those stirring Christmas hymns; let others know what is the chief matter that kindles our souls within us. Treasure is too precious, world is too needy that we should be silent. Above the din and merrymaking let the reigning sounding note be "the saying concerning this Child."

3.

V. 20. Returned to their business of looking after the sheep. Christmas brightens, transfigures our earthly callings, makes them tend to His glorification. The result of the spiritual joy will go with us into our daily occupation, will consecrate the toil of head and hand, make us happier in the discharge of livelihood duties, turn our workshop into a place where we glorify God. It is not so much office as it is earnestness, not so much position as it is grace that enables us to glorify God. The laboring man in his jacket, as he plies his tool, may glorify Him as well as the clergyman in his garb of black proclaiming the Gospel. There is no trade that is not sanctified by the Gospel. With such sentiments let us go back to our calling, thus receive real and abiding Christmas blessing. L. B.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

LUKE 2, 33—40.

Sunday after Christmas—sad and melancholy name. Glad Christmas time. Over. Most joyful message ever expressed in human language heard at Christmas. After Christmas. We feel like the shepherds when the light of glory of the Lord vanished, and all was dark and every-day life about them. All over and gone? No beneficial results? Time for self-examination.—Whole New Testament era after Christmas. Savior is come, has completed His work. His Gospel preached. What attitude are we going to take? Promised: "Behold, I lay," etc., Is. 28, 16. Stands, "is set," v. 34.

CHRIST THAT CHIEF CORNER-STONE IN SION.

1. *To some He is a Rock of Salvation.*

That He is intended to be. As such promised and expected. Anna and others looked for, etc., v. 38. Whence this expectation? Prophecy. As soon as sin entered, Savior promised, Gen. 3, 15. Hoped for, Ps. 14, 7. Shall come suddenly, Mal. 3, 1. As such announced to Joseph, Matt. 1, 21. Proclaimed by angels, Luke 2, 11. Acknowledged by Simeon. As such He is "set," stands there in time. Published and proclaimed.

Has brought and wrought salvation through His holy life and innocent suffering. The only rock. Salvation in no other, Acts 4, 11.

Savior and salvation intended for all. Taketh away sin of the world, John 1, 29. Propitiation for sins of the whole world, 1 John 2, 2. Bought also those who deny Him and are lost, 2 Pet. 2, 1. Gospel to every creature, Mark 16, 15.

To whom is He Rock of Salvation? Rise at and stand on this rock? Those who are fallen, shattered, helpless and hopeless, and know it. Penitent sinners. Look for redemption, v. 38. Penitent publicans and sinners. Mary Magdalene, Peter, etc. Laboring and heavily laden, Matt. 11, 28. "Other refuge have I none."

These lay hands of faith on Rock of Salvation, rest their hope for eternal welfare on Christ, Eph. 5, 14; Acts 15, 11; 1 Pet. 1, 13. They then stand on this sound Rock, Rom. 5, 1; Eph. 2, 17 ff.; John 10, 28 f.; 17, 24.

2. *To others a stone of stumbling and rock of offense.*

"Set for fall of many in Israel," v. 34. So Is. 8, 14.

Marvel? v. 33. Hard saying; who can hear it? John 6, 60. "Depart," like Jews, Acts 28, 25? Does God want men to be lost? And for that purpose even send Christ? No. "As I live," Ezek. 33, 11. God will have all men to be saved, 1 Tim. 2, 4. Not willing that any should perish, 2 Pet. 3, 9; Luke 19, 41; 13, 34; 1 Thess. 5, 9; John 3, 17.

But by their own fault. Cf. Is. 8, 14, 15. To whom spoken? What willful unbelief had preceded! Also compare Ex. 5, 2; 8, 32. There true Prov. 1, 24—32. Luke 24, 18, *will not*; v. 24, "*shall not*." Same truth expressed Matt. 21, 42, 44; Acts 4, 11; Rom. 9, 32 f.; 1 Pet. 2, 6; John 3, 19 f.; 1 Cor. 1, 23; 2 Cor. 2, 15.

Thoughts of many hearts revealed. Christ preached, decision must follow. Christ and Gospel cannot be ignored, some attitude must be taken. Stands as *sign* spoken against. All enmity towards God directed against Christ, and reveals itself when Christ is offered in Gospel.

Unbelievers often seem harmless and good-natured. But when urged to accept Christ, enmity breaks out, words of hatred and blasphemy. Rationalists will endure talk of God and Providence in general, but not Christ. Self-righteous will permit preaching of morality, but fall into a rage and fury if Christ, Savior of sinners, is preached, and they are exhorted to embrace Him.

They do not want Christ as Savior, so they shall come to fall, are hardened, grow worse, show unbrokenness of heart. God gives them up to be lost, gives them over to a reprobate mind. The Gospel that was to be a savor unto life becomes to them a savor unto death, 2 Cor. 2, 16. God is not mocked, Gal. 6, 7.

*Conclusion.*—Mark 16, 16.

E. P.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Is. 1, 18.

At end of year merchants close and balance accounts; debits and credits, assets and liabilities; financial standing. So in matters spiritual. Years, and not many of them, before final judgment.

"COME NOW AND LET US RECKON TOGETHER!"

1. *Look at God's record!*

He proposes reckoning. Has nothing to fear, Ps. 51, 4. Nothing but goodness and benefits for body and soul. All unmerited. Must produce a feeling and expression of profound gratitude.

2. *Look at our own record!*

Nothing but sins and shortcomings. Great and many. They are all in our column. Have so often promised to better our sinful lives. Must produce feeling of shame and repentance.

Yet not despair. A merciful reckoner. Forgiveness for Christ's sake.

Then promise and earnestly attempt new obedience for the new year.

E. P.